

Chet Dobis

Indiana State Representative, District 13



Summer, 2001

Dear Friends:

The 2001 long session of the Indiana General Assembly has ended with the passage of a new state budget and several other important pieces of legislation. I am pleased we completed our work on time in a bipartisan manner.

The new two-year state budget includes increased funding for education, CHOICE and other important programs while avoiding a general tax increase. The budget also includes funding for several important local projects that are detailed inside this newsletter.

We passed several other laws that will benefit our state in a variety of areas, including health care, education, crime, election reform and environmental protection. We made improvements to our license branch operations and passed legislation that will protect consumers from annoying telephone calls with the establishment of a do-not-call list. I have described many of these new laws in the next few pages.

In addition, you will find a map of our new legislative district. We are required to redraw the district boundaries every 10 years due to population shifts. I welcome those of you who are new to the district and look forward to working with you in the coming months to make Indiana a better place to live.

Please contact my office if you have additional concerns or questions about state government. You may e-mail me at H13@ai.org or call toll-free at 1-800-382-9842.

Sincerely,

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New budget increases school support, local development

Going into the 2001 legislative session, many observers felt that a sluggish economy would make it difficult to enact a biennial state budget without either passing a general tax increase or cutting funding for critical areas like public education. However, the budget bill that became law continues our record of avoiding general tax increases, while providing additional state support to our schools, health care and local projects.

The final version of House Enrolled Act 1001 enables the state to increase support for public schools across Indiana by an average of 3.5 percent each of the next two fiscal years, with minimum guarantees built in to help schools avoid cutting programs and personnel. Funding for higher education was increased by an average of 3.2 percent each year.

Services and local development

The budget includes additional funding for the CHOICE program that provides in-home care services for the elderly and disabled, as well as Build Indiana Fund support for research and technology, community wastewater and drinking water grants, airport development and improvements to voting systems.

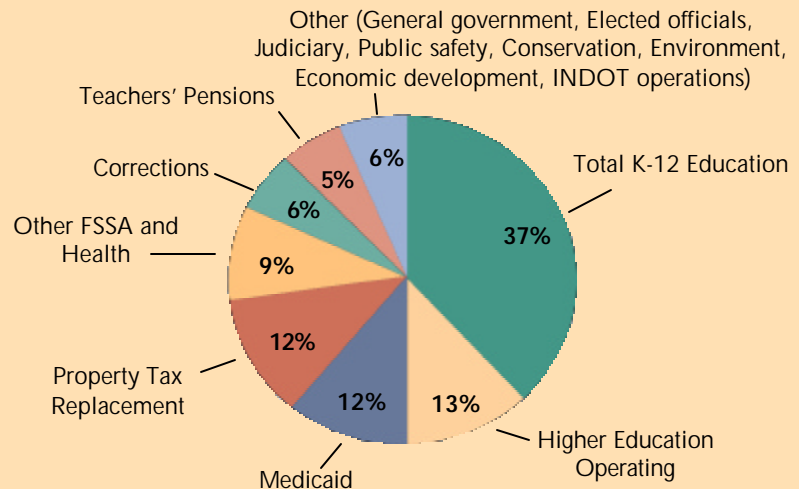
Tax relief

It was disappointing that we were unable to provide the levels of tax relief that were included in past state budgets, but I am pleased that we were able to extend the life of the homestead credit at 10 percent and maintain the earned income tax credit that assists working families on lower incomes.

Businesses and farms will receive an income tax credit on personal property beginning in 2003, and mobile homes have been changed to be treated as real property with similar deductions. The budget bill continues to fund a statewide property tax relief program that now takes about 16 percent off all property taxes. When coupled with the 10 percent homestead credit, that translates to savings of around 26 percent.

A bill the size of the budget does not contain everything I would like, but considering the fiscal restraints facing legislators going into the 2001 session, I feel this budget is a major accomplishment.

Spending highlights from the 2001-2003 budget



Build Indiana Funds go to District 13

Since the Hoosier Lottery began in 1989, a portion of the earnings has gone to local development. Listed below is money awarded to our district for 2001.

- \$500,000 toward the purchase and merger of community utilities into the Merrillville Conservancy District and clean up of Turkey Creek

- \$50,000 to the Merrillville Volunteer Fire Department to purchase equipment



REP. DOBIS CONFERS WITH REP. TOM KROMKOWSKI (D - SOUTH BEND) IN THE HOUSE CHAMBER.

License branch improvements underway

Patrons and employees of license branches will be pleased with changes enacted by the Legislature this year. Those changes should make the process of going to the license branch more efficient.

House Enrolled Act 1170 contains the following changes: Drivers will be able to renew their licenses through the mail and over the Internet, and will be able to register their vehicles in any county. Vehicle registration deadlines will be staggered and come twice a month to reduce lines. Additionally, the state will have to conduct a public hearing before closing any license branch.



Property tax focus of Dobis legislation

I am pleased to have been a part of House Bill 1902, considered perhaps one of the most important pieces of legislation addressing the property tax issue in Lake County. As passed, House Bill 1902 mandates an independent reassessment of all property in Lake County for the March 1, 2002 reassessment. This legislation also requires the county to account for the monies spent from the county reassessment fund and calls for follow up reassessments to ensure changes in the current system. Starting in 2004, House Bill 1902 will require the state board of tax commissioners—rather than local township assessors—to assess major industrial properties in the area.

Additionally, there is a provision in this legislation that allows municipalities in Lake County to adopt a local option income tax. Before the tax can be approved by the city, public hearings must be held and the city's budget must be cut by 3%. The money generated through this tax can only be used for property tax replacement and will expire on December 31, 2005, regardless of when it is imposed.

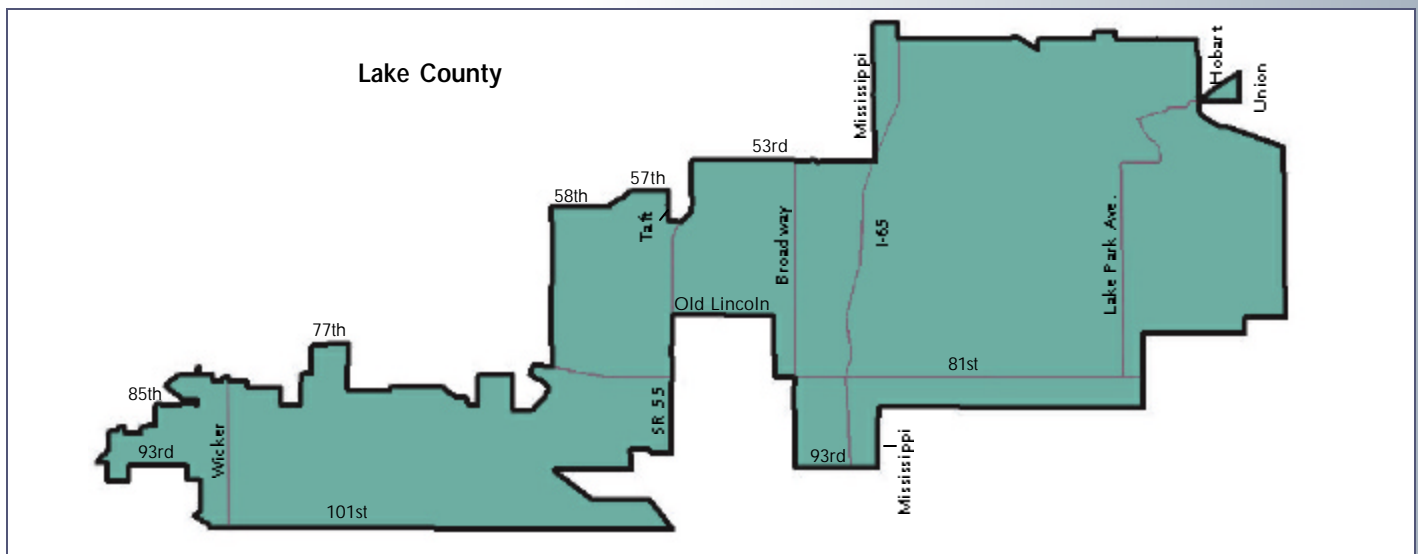
Finally, House Bill 1902 provides for a homestead credit for certain, qualifying, low-income individuals in Lake County. The tax credit will be funded by gaming admissions taxes that would otherwise be paid to the county and the three largest municipalities.

House Bill 1902 represents many months of hard-work and compromise by Lake County legislators. I believe this legislation will bring sound assessment practices to Lake County by providing tax-paying residents with a fair system of assessments that will reflect differences in values in homes rather than political ties. I am confident that this system will bring about a reduction in property taxes paid by residents of South Lake County, as under-assessed homes in the northern sections receive a more accurate valuation.



REP. DOBIS ADDRESSES THE HOUSE.

The new look of District 13



During this year's session you may have heard about redistricting in the news. After each census, the Indiana General Assembly is required by law to redraw House, Senate and Congressional district boundaries according to population changes.

Each district must have 60,000 people, which means that as the population moves to or from various parts of the state, boundaries shift to reflect that change. District boundaries are very complicated, and it took months of effort and

debate among legislators to reach a consensus. In the end, however, I feel that the district lines we have drawn are as fair as possible.

District 13 encompasses the communities of Hobart, Merrillville, and with the redistricting also includes Schererville and St. John.

For both the current members and those new to the district, I look forward to serving you. Please contact me if you have questions about the district or any other matters.

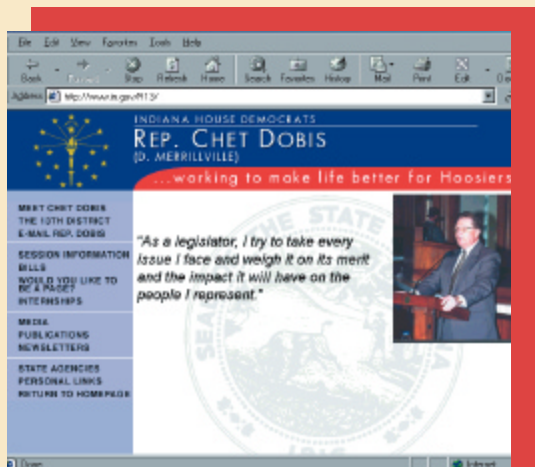


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Privacy from telemarketers and kids' issues

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In 2001, lawmakers took steps to help reduce the interruption of telemarketers calling you at home. Through House Enrolled Act 1222, you will be able to have your name placed on a do-not-call list that will prohibit most solicitors from contacting you via the telephone. To be placed on the list, contact the Office of the Indiana Attorney General about the **Telephone Privacy List at 1-888-834-9969.**

Juvenile Curfew

Indiana's curfew law for juveniles was ruled unconstitutional

last year, but House Enrolled Act 1084 makes changes in the law to conform with recent cases. These changes enable youths to stay out past the curfew if they are engaged in certain activities protected by federal and state laws, including school and religious functions.

New kindergarten date

Children who turn five years of age by July 1 will be able to attend kindergarten classes that fall through a provision included in the state budget. Previously, a child had to be five by June 1.

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